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Latin American Trends

STAFF NOTES

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LATIN AMERICAN TRENDS

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Western Hemisphere Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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Argentina: Concern Over Rightist Actions

Leading Argentines are becoming increasingly outspoken in condemning right-wing abuses of the government's anti-terrorist campaign.

The US embassy reports that it is hearing criticism from a wide range of political figures, churchmen, journalists, and even civil servants. Many were content to see the military come to power in March but are now distressed at right-wing violence. They are alarmed that the government still has not accounted for a large number of prisoners, and the recent upsurge in indiscriminate killings has convinced many that they have more to fear from the right than from leftist guerrillas.

Despite expressions of concern in many circles, there is no public campaign being mounted against the government, and most expressions of concern have been cautious. The leader of the country's second largest political party recently signed a declaration, which condemned the disappearance of two leading members of the party but only indirectly indicated the party's belief that the security forces were responsible. Both have since been released.

The church is said to be convinced that security officials were responsible for the recent death of five priests alleged to be leftists and is less inclined to be conciliatory toward the junta than before. The papal nuncio strongly protested the killings.

President Videla may be trying to curtail abuses. Rumored military reassignments, for example, would shift two so-called "hardliners" out of their troop command positions. Moreover, a presidential spokesman last week assured the US embassy that the perpetrators of the murder of 30 alleged leftists the weekend before would be punished.

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